

MISSOURI. Conservationist

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[NOTE TO OUR READERS]

Caring for Conservation Facilities

For more than 70 years, the Missouri Department of Conservation has worked diligently to carry out its citizen-created mission. Part of that mission is to provide opportunities for all citizens

to use, enjoy and learn about fish, forest and wildlife resources.

Since its beginning in 1937, the Department has acquired more than 1000 conservation areas across the state and has invested in the development of numerous facilities to fulfill our mission. Examples include fishing lakes and ponds, wetlands, shooting ranges, boat launching ramps, roads, parking lots, trails, nature centers and fish hatcheries. One of our ongoing challenges is maintaining these important conservation facilities that hundreds of thousands of people enjoy each year.

For example, the facilities of the Department's coldwater trout hatchery system were constructed in the 1940s and 1950s and are in need of renovation to continue to meet the desires of Missouri's anglers. The facilities include Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery near Branson, Bennett Spring Fish Hatchery near Lebanon, Roaring River Fish Hatchery near Cassville, Montauk Fish Hatchery near Salem and Meramec Springs Fish Hatchery near St. James. These fish hatcheries produce nearly two million pounds of trout per year that are stocked in Lake Taneycomo and the four trout parks for the enjoyment of Missouri anglers. We are in the final phase of making major renovations at the coldwater trout hatchery facilities. The result will be more efficient and effective trout production and the stocking of bigger fish for anglers to enjoy.

Similar to the coldwater hatcheries, many of the Department's major wetlands are more than 50 years old and are in need of renovation. Renovation of wetlands is taking place at Fountain Grove, Ted Shanks, Montrose, Duck Creek

and Schell Osage Conservation Areas. The original working parts of the wetlands, including levees, water control structures and pumps, are simply past their life expectancy. The renovation will revive the wetland management and function of these historical areas to ensure that they will be enjoyed by many generations to come.

To meet the challenge of maintaining our infrastructure, the Department has developed an inventory system. The system provides a detailed account of infrastructure assets, a means to monitor maintenance history and an ability to project future needs. Special attention is given to major building facilities (i.e. nature centers and offices) and major mechanical items (pumps, engines, wells and hatchery equipment) as well as asphalt roads and parking lots. The infrastructure inventory system allows us to project the peaks and valleys of maintenance needs and provides a means for budget planning.

The Department of Conservation places utmost emphasis on taking care of its facilities and conservation areas for the enjoyment of the public. Repair and renovation of these facilities requires significant resources and will continue to be a challenge for years ahead. Next time you are enjoying Missouri's beautiful conservation areas and facilities, you will have a better understanding of what it takes to help everyone enjoy our fish, forest and wildlife resources.

Bill Lueckenhoff, design and development division chief



OUR MISSION: *To protect and manage the fish, forest and wildlife resources of the state; to serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities; and to provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about fish, forest and wildlife resources.*



On the cover and left: Photographer Noppadol Paothong captured these images of greater prairie chickens. To enjoy more of his photography, and to learn more about these splendid animals, read his article starting on page 14.

NextGEN

This section reports on goals established in *The Next Generation of Conservation*. To read more about this plan, visit www.MissouriConservation.org/12843.

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"Plant trees. They give us two of the most crucial elements for our survival: oxygen and books."—A. Whitney Brown

Regulations Update

Changes to the Wildlife Code in 2008 continue efforts to promote outdoor recreation.

Many efforts to measure student achievement and the American Department of Education's emphasis on it have been made. One of the first programs to take this into account was the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). As the NAEP has become more familiar, testing of its progress has increased. In order to measure progress in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies, the NAEP has developed a set of achievement standards. These standards are designed to indicate what students should know and be able to do in each subject area. The NAEP also includes achievement standards for English language arts, science, and social studies.



GOOD CHIPS

I just read my February
Conservationist, and I
can't thank you enough.

for including the requirement of owners of bears, mountain lions, wolves and their hybrids to microchip the animals [*Regulations Update*; Page 26].

This will certainly help in convincing the state and county to follow the lead and require this on all dangerous carnivores. I am sure the sheriffs in all the counties appreciate this in helping them to identify animals.

Rosella Baller, via Internet

COVER BIRD

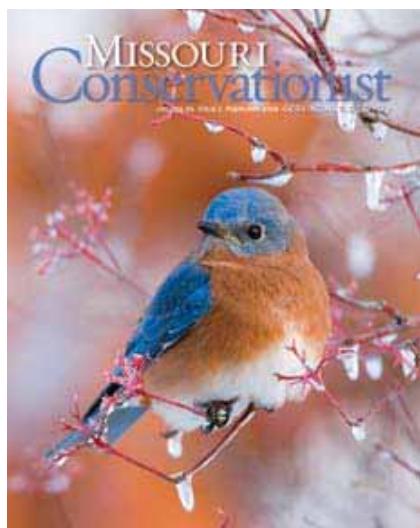
I just finished the February issue. The magazine now is the best it has ever been! This month's cover is terrific. It could be the cover every month!

Bob Ginther, Lee's Summit

FISH SCHOOL

I am an avid fly fisherman, and I have thoroughly enjoyed trout fishing at Bennett Spring State Park for the past 40-plus years.

What a great surprise when I found out the Department of Conservation had teamed up with Missouri Western State University to stock



for their partnership allowing us northwest Missourians the opportunity to enjoy our passion right here in our own backyard!

Mike Buckler, St. Joseph

A TO Z AND TYWAPPITY

About "Tywhoppety," [November 2007; *Trail Guide: Tywappity Community Lake*] you might be interested in the entry in A to Z Missouri which gives origins and meanings of Missouri towns. In part, it says: "This name is very old, and probably harks back to a Native American word; it appears on old maps, sometimes spelled Zewapeta. Many explanations have been given. (1) In Shawnee, elk were called 'wapiti,' literally 'white rump.' (2) 'Ty' in Shawnee means 'chief.' (3) The Shawnee name means 'place of no return,' perhaps signifying that it was halfway between two important places. (4) A modern nickname is pronounced (teye WOP) with this interesting explanation: This comes from railroad times, and the name is a pronunciation of the main activity in the area—this is where people whopped railroad ties from the timber."

Hazel M. White, Shawnee, KS (Place of no return?)

Editor's note: A to Z Missouri: The Dictionary of Missouri Place Names by Margot Ford McMillen is available from Pebble Publishing Inc. & Missouri Gold Booksellers at 205 Central Street, Rocheport, MO 65279, www.pebblepublishing.com, or 573-698-3903.

HUNTING HEAVY?

Your February issue has a large helping of ways and means of killing wild animals.

The front and back covers give us a glimpse of songbird appreciation, but between the covers it is quite bloody. Even when you write about nurturing quail or other birds or animals, it is with a view to eventually killing them for our own enjoyment or consumption. I can understand that many of your readers relish articles on killing or trapping, but you may be underestimating how many there are of us who disagree quite strongly.

Please try for better balance in the future.

MaryAnn Salo, Stockton



DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS

Phone: 573-751-4115
Address: P.O. Box 180,
Jefferson City 65102-0180

REGIONAL OFFICES

Southeast/Cape Girardeau: 573-290-5730
Central/Columbia: 573-884-6861
Kansas City: 816-655-6250
Northeast/Kirksville: 660-785-2420
Southwest/Springfield: 417-895-6880
Northwest/St. Joseph: 816-271-3100
St. Louis: 636-441-4554
Ozark/West Plains: 417-256-7161

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Phone: 573-522-4115, ext. 3856 or 3249
Address: Circulation, P.O. Box 180,
Jefferson City 65102-0180
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OMBUDSMAN QUESTIONS

Phone: 573-522-4115, ext. 3848
Address: Ombudsman, P.O. Box 180,
Jefferson City 65102-0180
E-mail: Ken.Drenon@mdc.mo.gov

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Phone: 573-522-4115, ext. 3245 or 3847
Address: Magazine Editor, P.O. Box 180,
Jefferson City 65102-0180
E-mail: Magazine@mdc.mo.gov

MISSOURI Conservationist

GOVERNOR Matt Blunt

THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Don Johnson
Chip McGeehan
Lowell Mohler
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Assistant Director Denise Brown

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Human Resources Debbie Strobel
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Protection Dennis Steward
Resource Science Ronald Dent
Wildlife Dee Cee Darrow

CONSERVATIONIST STAFF

Editor In Chief Ara Clark
Managing Editor Nichole LeClair
Art Director Cliff White
Writer/Editor Tom Cwynar
Staff Writer Bonnie Chasteen
Staff Writer Jim Low
Staff Writer Arleasha Mays
Photographer Noppadol Paothong
Photographer David Stonner
Designer Stephanie Ruby
Artist Dave Besenger
Artist Mark Raithel
Circulation Laura Scheuler

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Reader Photo

HAWK TALES

Reader Don Gard photographed this immature red-tailed hawk in Sikeston. "This particular hawk stayed in the front yard of our office for two days," said Gard. "He had caught a squirrel and ate it completely in that period. This was the second day, and he was cleaning up the backbone when I took the picture from about 25 feet away. It is so rare to see a hawk so close and be able to photograph him."

on the WEB

This month check out our featured Web pages, or go online anytime to learn more about conservation at www.MissouriConservation.org.



TURKEY HUNTING

www.MissouriConservation.org/7498

Take this opportunity to learn about wild turkeys, how you can enjoy turkey hunting and perhaps improve your chances of bagging a turkey.



WILDFIRE

www.MissouriConservation.org/15942

A combination of dry weather and wind makes early spring the heart of wildfire season in Missouri. Almost all of these fires could be prevented.



ADOPT-A-TRAIL

www.MissouriConservation.org/8802

Adopting a trail provides an opportunity for you to be actively involved in conservation. Maintaining and enhancing trails improves the resource for all to enjoy.



ASK THE OMBUDSMAN

Q: Male deer shed their antlers every year with few exceptions. So what happens to the buck fawn's nubs? Do they fall off, absorb back into the deer's system or do they just keep them for next year?

A: A small percentage of buck fawns might lose their tiny antlers if they've broken through the skin and hardened, but most keep their buttons. A yearling buck generally sprouts a spike or forked antler. That antler gets its start from the button that begins to show after the buck is 6 or 7 months old. So I guess you could say button bucks get a head start on other bucks, which drop their antlers during winter. Search "antlers" at www.MissouriConservation.org for more details.

This is the season when many outdoorspeople seek a cure for their cabin fever by going afield in search of shed antlers. MDC gets frequent questions about the regulations pertaining to shed antlers. Here's an excerpt from Chapter 10 of the *Wildlife Code*: Any person who finds a dead deer with antlers still attached to the skull plate while afield and takes those antlers into possession must report the taking to a conservation agent within 24 hours to receive possession authorization. Shed antlers not attached to the skull plate found while afield may be possessed, bought and sold by any person without possession authorization.

March is also the start of a new permit year, so now is a good time to get your 2008 hunting and fishing permit. It will be valid from the date of purchase through the end of February 2009.

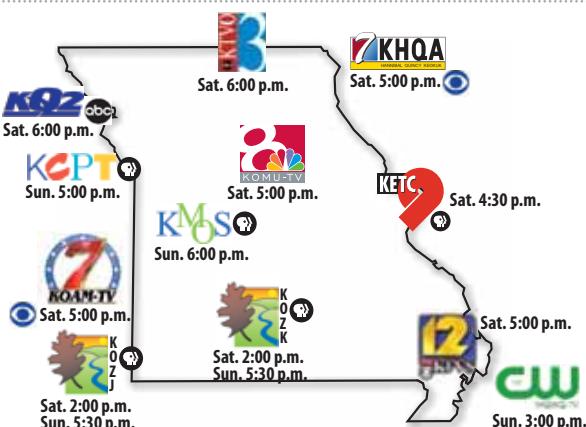
Ombudsman Ken Drenon will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Department of Conservation programs. Write him at P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573-522-4115, ext. 3848, or e-mail him at Ken.Drenon@mdc.mo.gov.

on the TV



Television
the way
nature
intended!

For additional show information and video clips,
be sure to visit
www.MissouriConservation.org/8726.



Species of Concern

Ozark Wake Robin



Common name: Ozark wake robin

Scientific names: *Trillium pusillum*, var. *ozarkanum*

Range: Ozark region of Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma

Classification: Imperiled due to scarcity

To learn more about endangered species: www.MissouriConservation.org/8227

WILDFLOWER FANCIERS READILY recognize this as one of Missouri's seven species of the distinctive wildflower trillium. Like its more common relative, snow trillium (*Trillium nivale*), Ozark wake robin starts with white petals. As it ages, its blossoms gradually turn pink. It exists in isolated populations in southern Missouri. One is in a residential front yard that is mowed regularly. Another is beneath a water tower. Ozark wake robin's apparent adaptability makes its spotty distribution difficult to explain. One factor may be the plant's reliance on ants to spread its tiny seeds. This limits the distance it can disperse and establish new populations. Ozark wake robin had special significance to legendary Missouri botanist Julian Steyermark, author of the *Flora of Missouri*. Cora Shoop discovered a population of the plant in Barry County in 1930, and Steyermark recognized it as a species new to science. She showed him where it grew, and romance blossomed. Shoop eventually became Mrs. Julian Steyermark.

PHOTO: TIM SMITH; ART: MARK RATHKE

Warbler Migration

The birds of spring are on their way.

MARCH and April are the best months to enjoy warblers. Males sport fresh breeding plumage of breathtaking hues. Trees give the best clues to when migrants will arrive. Warblers need caterpillars and other insect morsels that appear with foliage. Tender leaves and buds draw waves of hooded, parula and magnolia warblers, redstarts and other members of the clan northward in mixed flocks. Use recordings of their songs to help identify birds only glimpsed in distant treetops or not at all.



Woodcock Display

Come see a play featuring Cyrano De Bird-gerac.

MARCH is the month to see the mating ritual of a bird too consumed by romance to be self-conscious about its comically large nose. Male woodcocks (aka "timberdoodles") emerge from tangled stream-side thickets at dusk to strut their stuff on patches of bare ground. During this nuptial dance, they serenade their lady loves with what is arguably the least musical song ever uttered. Their nasal "peents" sound much like a nighthawk's call. This done, they take flight, climbing in wide spirals with their flight feathers twittering like fairy wings. This aerial display takes them to dizzying heights—often beyond human sight. Then they tumble back to earth, pulling up a few feet before reaching the spot where the show began.





KC Area Springs Into March

Learn about woodcock courtship and naturescaping.

Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center in Blue Springs has something for all ages and interests this month. A half-day workshop on "naturescaping" March 1 will cover gardening with native plants. The next day you can join Scouts for a litter pickup. Nature lovers age 8 and older can witness the aerial mating ritual of the American woodcock March 20, and those age 55 and older can learn about bird calls on a nature walk March 25. For more information about these and other nature center programs, call 816-228-3766.



Tune Up for Turkey Season

A special patterning range at Bois D'Arc CA makes it easy.

Turkey hunting success depends on knowing the capability of shotgun, choke and ammunition. The only way to know the effective range of particular combinations is to "pattern" them on paper. The Andy Dalton Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center at Bois D' Arc Conservation Area has a range just for this purpose. Shooters use 4-by-4-foot lengths of paper and test their guns and ammo at different distances. Looking at the spacing of shot holes reveals how long a shot you can take with certainty of a quick, clean kill. The \$3 user fee includes targets and eye and hearing protection. The same price applies for use of other facilities, including the rifle and handgun

ranges, target and 3-D archery ranges and trap and skeet fields. All are accessible to shooters with mobility impairments. Call 417-742-4361.

Trail Guide



HIKE, BIKE OR RIDE IN "RUFF" COUNTRY



THIS 2,600-ACRE, mostly forested area 4 miles southwest of Kirksville offers a wide range of unusual recreational opportunities. It is one of a few areas in the state that were stocked with ruffed grouse in the 1980s and 1990s.

These large relatives of bobwhite quail have not thrived in most areas where they were reintroduced, but small numbers may survive at Sugar Creek CA. Late March to early April is a good time to listen for male ruffed grouse drumming at dawn to attract mates. The area has a 10-mile trail complex that is open to bicyclists and horseback riders. Hikers can share this trail or enjoy the 2-mile Ironwood Trail, which is reserved exclusively for their use. An unstaffed shooting range has disabled-accessible 25-, 50- and 100-yard shooting positions and a shotgun range. The area also boasts good hunting for deer, turkey and squirrels and excellent birdwatching during the spring and fall migration periods.

Area name: Sugar Creek Conservation Area

Trails: Ironwood Trail, 2 miles; Multi-use trail, 10 miles

Unique features: Bike/horse trail, possibility of seeing ruffed grouse

For more information: Call 660-785-2420 or

visit www.MissouriConservation.org/a7307



NextGEN

TAKING ACTION

TRIM aids communities hit by ice



THE TREE RESOURCE Improvement and Management program expanded services to help 42 communities recover from damage caused by ice storms in January. The Missouri Conservation Commission provided more than \$350,000 to help with the removal of downed and hazardous trees following the ice storms. The funds were provided to the city of St. Louis and communities located in counties that had been declared major disaster areas by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The TRIM grants are part of an effort by the Department of Conservation and the Missouri Community Forest Council to assist communities in the care and maintenance of trees. Annually, through its competitive cost-share tree care program, TRIM provides grants of \$1,000 to \$10,000 to assist government agencies, public schools and non-profit groups with projects to manage, improve or conserve trees on public lands.

TRIM: NOPPADOL PAETHONG; BEE: JIM RATHFERT

You Can Help Save Bees

Reverse the decline of bee populations, plant natives.

Help take the sting out of problems contributing to the population declines of native bees and other pollinators by planting native plants this spring. The insects make reproduction possible for most of the fruits, vegetables, seed crops and other crops we rely upon for food, drugs, fuel and other items. According to the National Academies of Sciences, disease, competition from exotic species and habitat loss are among the causes for decreases in pollinator populations. Everyone can help reverse declines linked to habitat loss by planting native plants at home, school, the workplace and public lands.

Start your pollinator conservation efforts by assessing your property to learn the native pollinators and habitat that already exist. Next, adjust land management practices to avoid harming the pollinators and habitat, then work to enhance the habitat. Grow Native!, which promotes use of native plants for landscaping, has excellent information on plants that attract wildlife and a list of retail sales outlets for native plants and seeds. The Xerces Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting biological diversity through invertebrate conservation, has a wealth of in-depth, practical information about the conservation of pollinators on its Web site, www.xerces.org.





Buy Your 2008 Permits Now

Get ready to head outdoors this spring.

The onset of spring opens the doors to many opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation.

Before you head to your favorite fishing hole or hunting spot, remember to purchase 2008 hunting and fishing permits. Most 2007 permits expired Feb. 28. The 2007–2008 Fur Handlers and Migratory Bird Hunting permits

remain valid through June 30. Missourians ages 16 to 65 and non-residents need valid fishing and hunting permits to cast lines in state waters and participate in hunting seasons. Permits may be purchased at Conservation Department offices and nature centers, retail vendors located throughout the state and online.

Discover Nature—Women

Workshops are a fun and safe way to learn.

Women looking to learn outdoor skills can get training at the Discover Nature—Women Workshop. The June 6–8 event at the Windermere Conference Center in Roach, Mo., includes courses in fishing, canoeing, archery, shooting sports and camping. The program is open to women ages 18 and older. Girls 14–17 may

attend if accompanied by an adult. A \$20 deposit is required with registration. The registration deadline is May 23. For more information or to register, contact

Tracy Tomson at

TracyTomson@mdc.mo.gov or 573-522-4115, ext. 3808. Participants are responsible for making room and meal reservations with Windermere at 573-346-5200 or 800-346-2215.



Paddlefishing

Scout it Out

Area Name: Table Rock Lake, James River Arm

For more info: General information on paddlefishing is also available online at www.MissouriConservation.org/7251.



IF YOU ARE intrigued by the unusual and love challenges, you should try paddlefishing at Table Rock Lake. There's no mistaking paddlefish with other fish. Often called spoonbills, paddlefish have a long, paddle-shaped rostrum that accounts for about one-third of their body length, small eyes and no scales. The fish often weigh more than 100 pounds. Although they are among Missouri's largest fish, paddlefish feed by straining tiny plants and animals from the water. The feeding method makes the use of baits and lures useless. Instead, anglers pursue them by snagging—jerking heavy lines with big, three-pointed hooks through the water.

Successful snagging depends primarily on water temperature and flow. As both increase, the fish make spawning runs upstream. That is why the best early season fishing is found in the warm waters of Table Rock Lake. On Table Rock, most snagging occurs in the upper reaches of the James River Arm, within 3 miles of Flat Creek near Point 15.

The paddlefish season runs from March 15 through April 30. Review the 2008 *Summary of Missouri Fishing Regulations* for season regulations.



Next
GEN

Goose-Proof Your Property

A few simple preventive measures may be all you need.

To Canada geese, a well-manicured lawn can look like an engraved invitation to take up residence in your yard. The birds' presence can be a source of misery to people who must endure droppings and the risk of attacks from nesting birds. It is easier to prevent the birds from nesting initially than to make them leave once they have established nests.

A few simple preventative measures can help you avoid conflicts with geese. Remove nesting tubs that may have been placed years ago as part of Canada goose restoration efforts. With the population thriving, the tubs are no longer necessary, but geese will use them if they are available. Because geese typically walk from water onto the adjacent lawn, tall plants or a 3-foot high fence can help discourage them from entering your property. Further deterrence can be achieved with flashy plastic tape, air horns, high pressure water sprayers or using dogs trained to harass geese. More information on ways you can prevent geese from nesting on your property is available at www.MissouriConservation.org/16322.



Spring Wildflowers

Take a walk through the woods to see these beauties.

Although early spring is not the peak of the wildflower season, you can enjoy beautiful flowers in wooded locations around the state.

Wooded areas will be aglow with a variety of pretty white wildflowers. Dutchman's breeches feature clusters of small white flowers amid fern-like, bluish-green leaves. You can identify spring beauty by the distinct pink veining on its five, white petals. Bloodroot is a pretty, white poppy. It gets its name from the sienna-red sap produced by its roots. The sap runs throughout the plant. Bluebells add a splash of color to woodland habitats. The showy flowers start out as pink buds and turn light blue upon opening.

FEATHERED FASCINATION



Nest Building

WHEN WATCHING BIRDS gather small twigs, grass and other seemingly fragile items, it's hard to believe they can make nests that can hold eggs and withstand harsh weather conditions. But time-tested construction methods enable birds to build sturdy nests. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *Handbook of Bird Biology* description of how American robins build nests shows the ingenuity used to make structures that can last for years.

Robins construct their cup-shaped nests in about six days. The female builds the nest. She gathers a variety of coarse natural materials, such as twigs and grasses and some man-made items to form the outer wall of the nest. Once enough items are gathered, the female uses her body to shape the wall. She squats in the middle of the items, rotating and pressing down on them to form a cup. Pellets of mud and/or earthworm castings are gathered for use as a mortar to form the inner wall. The female again rotates her body inside the structure to shape the nest. The robins then use fine, soft, dead grasses to form a nest lining. To complete the nest, the female rotates her body inside the structure to shape the lining by pressing it into the mud layer. The female will begin laying eggs a few days after the nest is completed.



Prevent Fish Kills

Pond owners can take action now to save their fish.

Pond owners can protect their fish by watching for conditions that cause fish kills.

- Shallow water—Ponds should be at least 8 feet deep. Dredge to restore depth.
- Excess vegetation—Vegetation should not cover more than 15 percent of a pond's surface area. Remove excess vegetation with a rake, and dump it below the dam.
- Overpopulation—if your pond has too many small fish, make a point of taking lots home and eating them.

For more information, contact your regional Conservation Department office (see page 3) or visit www.MissouriConservation.org/22.



Mussels—Aquatic Canaries

Their decline warns of larger stream problems.

Early coal miners took canaries underground because the birds were sensitive to noxious gasses. When a canary keeled over, miners fled. Missouri streams have their own "canaries." Fresh-water mussels are especially sensitive to changes in water quality. They get food and oxygen from water, and—like caged canaries—they can't pick up and leave when their environment deteriorates. Of Missouri's 69 mussel species, 30 are species of "conservation

concern." Ten are state-endangered, and six are federally endangered. Five have not been seen in 10 or 20 years and may no longer exist in Missouri. We are not sure why. Dams hurt species that need running water. Soil erosion and pollution hurt all mussels, which can't survive in contaminated water or if they are covered in mud. Mussels have value beyond their ability to alert us to environmental problems. They get food by filtering particles out of the water. In some streams, this filtering equals stream flow, helping keep water clean. Also, mussels are an important link in the food chain, feeding crayfish, fish and mammals.

Stream Team



Bob & Lyda Steiert



STREAM CONSERVATION HAS been a career and a passion for Bob Steiert. After 39.5 years with federal environmental agencies, he set out to see what he could do as a citizen activist. One of his goals has been amassing 15 years of monthly water-quality data on the Little Blue River to help statistical analyses of the stream's water quality. He now has 13 years of data.

Steiert also carried over one career interest, the effects of winter highway de-icing on streams, to his Stream Team work. He says being outside year-round has unexpected rewards, such as watching a pioneering beaver swim right past him on its way up the Little Blue. "I am a civil engineer," he says. "I started out working on F-4H Phantom fighters, F-111 bombers and the Gemini space capsule for McDonnell Douglas. That was boring compared to my work on streams."

Stream Team Number: 304

Date formed: Aug. 21, 1992

Location: Little Blue River

For more info about Stream Teams: www.mostreamteam.org

Our Glorious Forests

CURRENT RIVER CA



Size: 29,330.52 acres

Location: Carter, Reynolds and Shannon counties. The main tract is 3 miles west of Ellington on Highway 106. There are 3 entrances: One is located 3 miles west of Ellington on Highway 106. Another is located on South Road in Ellington. The third is located on Reynolds County Road 626.

Highlights: This forested area features a picnic area, fishing jetties, Buford Pond (3 acres, fishable), Blue Springs Natural Area (17 acres), Cardareva Bluff Natural Area (95 acres) and 3 miles of the Current River.

Find more info: www.MissouriConservation.org/a9515



IF YOU LOOK forward to the eye-popping annual display of serviceberry and redbud blossoms, consider viewing them from the Current River this spring. The Current River Conservation Area features one of the largest and most beautiful examples of Ozark hardwood forest in the state, and it also shelters the headwaters of the Current River. A float trip

between March and June will reward you with the views of serviceberry, redbud, wild plum, wild crab, red buckeye, dogwood, hawthorn and tulip poplar blossoms. These flowering, fruit-bearing trees not only delight our eyes and gladden our winter-weary hearts, they support honeybees and an array of birds and other native wildlife. While we're accustomed to valuing Missouri's glorious forests for their habitat and industry values, it's hard to put a price on the experience of floating a wild Ozark river and witnessing the forest's annual rebirth.

Community Tree Care Grants

Applications for funding are due June 1.

ooling shade and leaves that help generate the air we breathe are among the many reasons for communities to care for their forests. Get the funds to enhance or help start a tree-care project on public lands in your community from the Tree Resource Improvement and Maintenance (TRIM) program. This cost-share program is administered by the Missouri Department of Conservation in cooperation with the Missouri Community Forest Council. Deadline for application is June 1. Download the application at www.MissouriConservation.org/7367.



We All Live in a Forest

Helping fourth-grade classes plant and study trees.

A ny Missouri fourth-grader can tell you that our state's Arbor Day is the first Friday in April. Its purpose is to help us remember why trees are important and to encourage us to plant more. Through their "Trees for Tomorrow" program, the Missouri departments of Conservation and Transportation help fourth-grade classes increase the number of trees in our state.

The Department of Transportation buys the trees, and the Department of Conservation grows and distributes them. To further support fourth-graders' study and cultivation of trees, the Department of Conservation supplies classes with curriculum materials. Although it's too late to enroll in the 2008 Arbor Day program, schools and teachers interested in receiving seedlings next year should call Matt Seek at 573-522-4115, ext. 3288.





Learn to Control Feral Hogs

Conference aims to "bar the gate" on further spread.

Feral hogs—domestic hogs that have escaped or been released deliberately into the wild—destroy cropland as well as sensitive habitats on public lands.

Whether you manage private or public land, you'll want to attend the 2008 National Conference on Feral Hogs April 13–15 in St. Louis. The

conference location reflects the spread of feral hogs northward. The gathering gives those coping with new invasions the chance to learn from southern managers' and researchers' eradication experiences. Register online at www.MissouriConservation.org/16623.



Native Plants

Beautiful and beneficial for both homes and farms.

Add beauty and life to your home landscape and farm with native plants. These hard-working products of Missouri's soils and climate will take weather extremes in stride, and they'll provide natural food and cover for wildlife. The addition of native warm-season pastures to your grazing system will also help your livestock maintain weight gains during drought years. The trick to using native plants successfully is choosing the right plants for your specific location and landscaping goals. If you plan to convert



conventional pastures to native warm-season grasses and wildflowers, you'll need to kill existing cover before spreading or drilling Missouri-grown seeds.

You can learn more about putting the right native plants on your place at www.GrowNative.org, or call your private land conservationist.

Burn Cool-Season Grass for Better Quail Habitat

On the Ground



RON LEHMAN HAS made his and a neighbor's farms in Cooper and Moniteau counties a haven for quail. His practices include strip disk-ing, which creates bare ground for chicks and brings out weeds to provide overhead cover. He also conducts prescribed burns throughout the year and sprays herbicides to control cool-season grasses. "We burn in February, then we go back in and spray after it greens up," Ron said. In addition, Ron has completed several acres of edge feathering, added downed tree structures to the middle of the open fields, and has established several grain foodplots. The farms have seen a dramatic response in quail numbers, rising from a low of two coveys to approximately 12 coveys on about 230 acres in 2006. To learn more about burning cool-season grasses to improve quail habitat, call your local private land conservationist. Find the number at www.MissouriConservation.org/14140.



Grand Opening

Our newest nature center is in the heart of the Ozarks.

Join the Twin Pines Conservation Education Center staff and local community members on April 19 as they celebrate the center's grand opening. The food and fun start at 9 a.m., and activities run until 3 p.m.

The newly opened, 456-acre area and interpretive center in Winona gives residents and visitors a glimpse into the region's natural and cultural history. Emphasizing Missouri's forest heritage, displays include vintage logging equipment, a log cabin and an early 20th century schoolhouse.

A number of educational and interpretive programs, including Stream Team training and birds of prey, are already scheduled. Besides organized activities, Twin Pines offers opportunities for hiking, bird watching, nature photography and other nature-related activities. A trail through the area provides access to pine-oak woodland and several other forest types. Other programs, special events and classes are available by appointment. For event information and registration, call 573-325-1381.



"Echoes of Outdoor Missouri"

CD features the sounds of four Missouri habitats.

Different habitats support different kinds of plants and animals—they also yield different suites of sound. Our audio producer, Dan Zarlenga, helps you associate the sounds you hear outdoors with their habitats of origin. His "Echoes of Outdoor Missouri" CD features the sounds of four distinct Missouri habitats—a river bluff trail, a prairie chicken lek, a sinkhole pond and a hardwood forest. Liner notes walk you through each habitat, naming the species you hear along the way. The CD is available for \$8 plus shipping and handling and sales tax (where applicable). Call toll-free 877-521-8632, or visit www.mdcNatureShop.com.

NATURE ACTIVITY



PHOTO: DAVID STONER

August A. Busch Memorial CA



FAMILIES, NATURE LOVERS and sportspeople in the greater St. Louis region are blessed with a world-class conservation area. The August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area in St. Charles County features an interpretive center offering nature-study programs, several walking trails and a self-guided auto tour. Other facilities include a shooting range and outdoor education center that also hosts field retriever trials and provides a designated area for dog training. In April, Busch CA teams up with Ducks Unlimited and the Monsanto Fund to host "Wetlands for Kids" day. This program is designed to excite kids, families and scout troops about nature and the outdoors. For more information about Busch CA, visit www.MissouriConservation.org/2346.

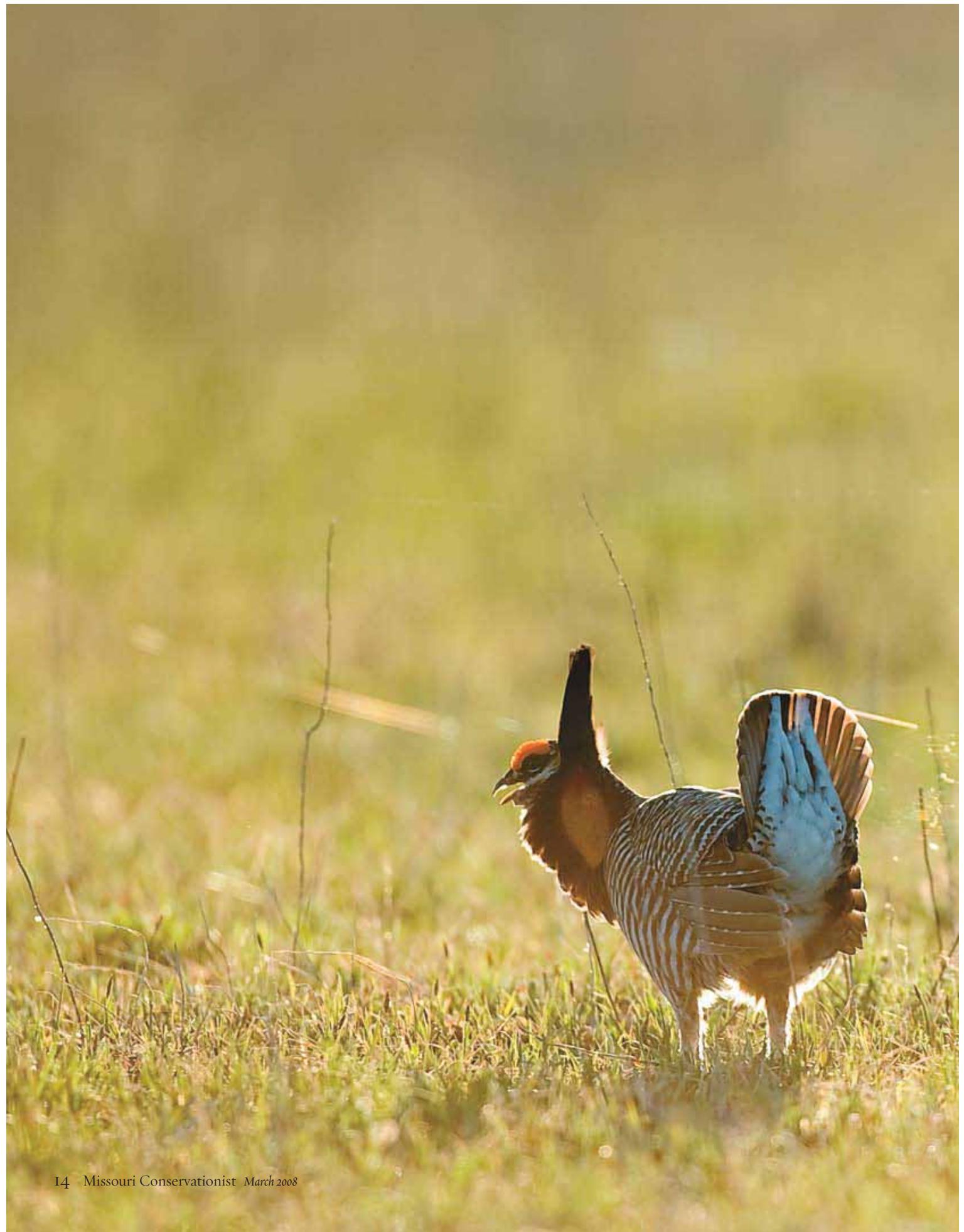
Program: "Wetlands for Kids 2008"

When: Saturday, April 5, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Where: August A. Busch Memorial CA in St. Charles County

Details: See live birds of prey; create wetland artwork; explore a beaver lodge; practice archery skills; learn to identify birds; tie fishing flies; see and touch snakes, frogs and turtles; watch retrievers in action; sample fried fish from Missouri's rivers, and much more.

For more information: Call 636-441-4554



Spirit of the Prairie

Will there be a tomorrow for prairie
chickens to dance again?

story and photos by Noppadol Paothong



On the booming ground, each male establishes a territory whose boundaries are somewhat flexible. Each male is master in his own territory, and most of his booming and mating are done there. Males prefer to use the same booming ground year after year from February through early June. *Information from Prairie Chickens of Missouri* by Charles Schwartz.

The moon cast bluish light over the prairie as I sat in my photo blind, waiting for dawn.

I could tell I was not alone. Ghost-like shadows passed my blind, and I heard hollow “oo-loo-woo” sounds. They were the calls of prairie chickens, my quarry for the day, and they sounded lonely and sad. The calls penetrated my soul like a spirit whispering in my ears.

Not long after first light, a male prairie chicken ran in front of me and stopped. Stamping his feet as he turned a full circle, he stretched out his long neck feathers, fanned his tail and filled his bright orange neck sacs with air before releasing a deep, resonant call. He was so close I could see the eyebrows on his thumb-size head.

Prairie chickens (*pinnated grouse*) were once common throughout the North American prairie. In 1900, there were two species of prairie chicken in the U.S.: the greater and the lesser prairie chicken. The three sub-species of the greater prairie chicken were the Attwater’s prairie chicken, the greater prairie chicken and the heath hen.



Cockfights for territory occur throughout the booming period, although in short and quick episodes. The fight seems ferocious as both cocks can jump several feet into the air, attempting to strike with their wings, feet and bills. However, little harm is done, and the most serious result is seldom more than a few missing feathers.
Information from Prairie Chickens in Missouri by Charles Schwartz.





Male prairie chickens gather around a female who visits a booming ground early in the morning (top). A few aggressive males in the center of the lek do most of the mating. When the female is ready to mate, she signifies by lowering her wings (right). After successfully mating, the female leaves the booming ground and nests in nearby grassland. Mating is often interrupted by an overzealous nearby male who will attack a dominant male while he is courting a female (bottom right).

Today, only two sub-species remain. The heath hen was declared extinct in 1932. The Attwater's prairie chicken may soon become extinct as well; only a handful remain along the upper Texas coast.

Greater prairie chickens are the only species found in Missouri, and they aren't faring well here. Hunting for these partridge-size birds ended in 1907, but their populations never recovered. Fewer than 500 greater prairie chickens now live in the state. They return each year to mate at known booming grounds located in the southwest and northern parts of the state.

Lowell Pugh, an emeritus member of the Missouri Prairie Foundation, has observed prairie chickens for more than 50 years near his hometown of Golden City. Pugh said he's often crawled over wet and muddy grass to get a close look at his beloved prairie chickens, and he remembers seeing flocks of them flying over the prairie during winter.



Prairie Chicken Recovery

Greater prairie chickens numbered in the hundreds of thousands on vast native grasslands that covered a third of Missouri prior to European settlement. Dramatic population declines over the past 100 years resulted from equally dramatic land use changes across those prairie landscapes. Today, fewer than 500 birds scattered in isolated flocks, remain.

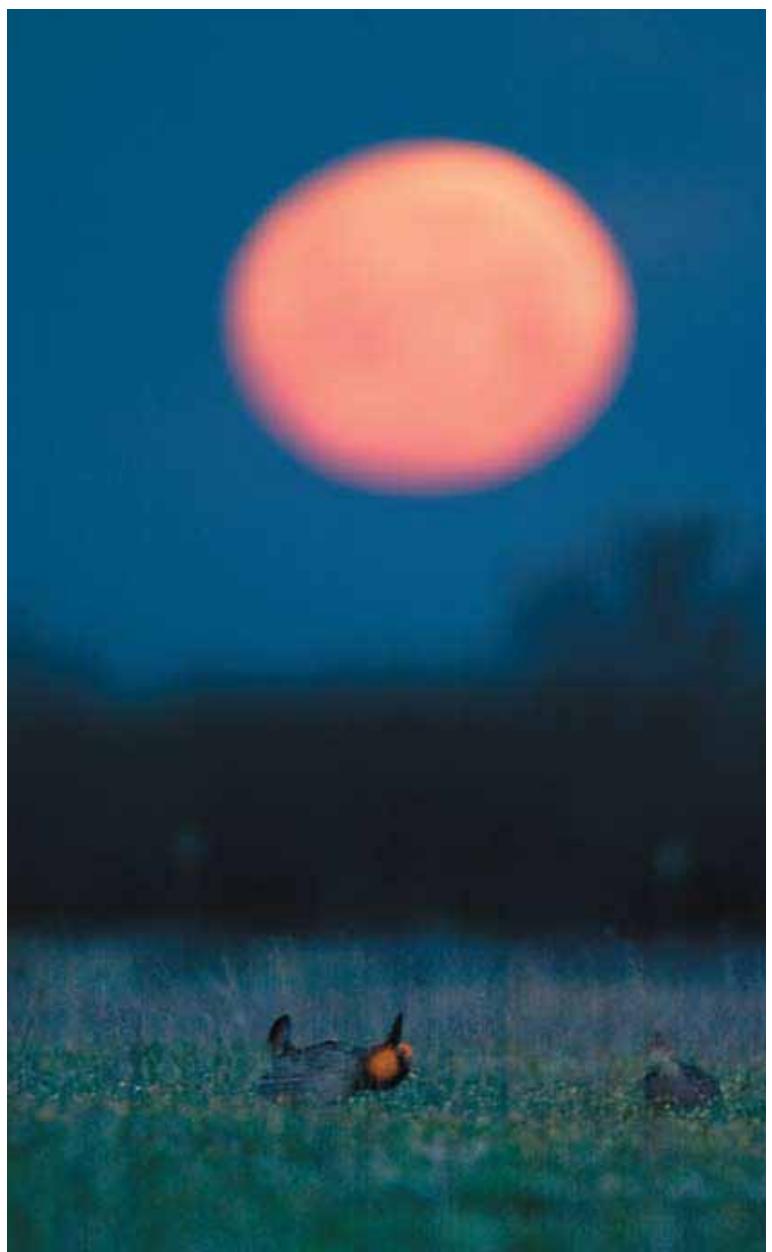
Prairie chickens depend on open vistas and expansive grasslands to avoid predators and successfully reproduce. They rarely persist in landscapes smaller than four square miles, and much of the land within these areas must be actively managed to provide suitable nesting and brood-rearing habitat.

The Missouri Department of Conservation, in cooperation with its Missouri Grasslands Coalition partners, has initiated a recovery program aimed at improving prairie chicken habitat and eventually removing the species from the State Endangered Species list. On Conservation Department and partner-owned lands, nesting, brood-rearing and roosting cover are being improved with unique approaches, including patch-burn grazing. However, long-term success depends on the voluntary actions of private landowners. Grasslands Coalition groups are working to identify and fund cost-share and incentive programs that help the birds while meeting the economic needs of farmers and other landowners.

Initial recovery efforts are focused in six grassland landscapes where prairie chicken recovery prospects are best (see map below). If these populations can be sustained, we will seek to expand suitable habitat to help reconnect the scattered, remnant populations. To learn more about prairie chicken recovery efforts, log onto www.MissouriConservation.org/landown/grass/coalition/. Consider joining one of the Missouri Grasslands Coalition groups, with opportunities for everyone from birdwatchers to hunters to farmers.



MAP BY SOPHIE BINDER





O

nly three male prairie chickens now visit the booming grounds where he had once observed hundreds. Pugh believes it won't be long before he witnesses the final chapter of their life.

"It is sad to see them disappear," Pugh said, "and I will miss them."

Photographing prairie chickens is my way of preserving their unique life history. My days usually begin around 4 a.m., starting with a half an hour of walking through fields with my heavy camera backpack.

I like to arrive well before good shooting light so that I have time to enjoy the calls of the meadowlarks, the booming of the prairie chickens and the first rustling breezes as morning arrives in the prairie.

Before entering the blind, I use my flashlight to ensure that nothing is hiding inside. Mice and other animals, even snakes, have used my blind as shelter. One morning, a prairie chicken stood on top of my blind while I was inside. I pressed my hand against the fabric and could feel his feet stamping as he surveyed the prairie for females.

A male prairie chicken rushes forward before sunrise to establish his territory on a booming ground in early spring (top left). Under moonlight, a lone male prairie chicken on his booming ground may call repeatedly for several hours (left). His sounds might be heard a mile or more away during a calm day. He will continue to perform until late May. For a chance to mate during springtime, male prairie chickens put themselves at risk while booming in open fields. A male prairie chicken holds his ground against a male northern harrier (bottom). Prairie chickens may lie still or flush when danger approaches.



A male prairie chicken flutter-jumps excitedly to attract the attention of a female (right). The jump is followed by a cackling call which occurs only in the presence of a female. A male prairie chicken uses a viewing blind at Dunn Ranch as his booming post (bottom). Younger males have learned to use objects such as rocks, cow chips or, in this case, blinds to be noticed by a female. However, she will pay very little attention to a male prairie chicken who is not in the center of the lek.



T

he many hours I spent in a blind photographing prairie chickens have brought me many unforgettable moments, but the joy of experiencing them was tinged with sadness. I couldn't help wondering how many more springs we will have to be able to see their booming dance and hear their sounds. Will there be a tomorrow for prairie chickens to dance again?

I hope so. ▲



Prairie chickens are adapted to tolerate harsh winter weather. Male prairie chickens will perform a dance even during snowy weather, but if the weather becomes severe they often postpone displaying.

The Family That

The shared language of turkey talk keeps the Parnell family close.

by Lynn Youngblood

First came the call.

"Clinton got in!" the voice said over the phone. Shelley Parnell of Sugar Creek had just been told her 11-year-old son, Clinton, had been chosen to participate in the Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center's first Youth-Only Managed Turkey Hunt.

That was in 2003, and every year since then 10 lucky youths are drawn for the hunt.

Shelley was mildly disappointed that Clinton's twin brother, Travis, wasn't one of the lucky hunters, but Travis didn't take it hard. In fact, he was extremely supportive of his brother before and during the hunt.

Meeting the Mentor

Like all the youth hunters at Burr Oak Woods, Clinton was paired with a turkey guide. The volunteer guides are not only veteran turkey hunters, they also have received special training at the Lake City Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center in Blue Springs in preparation for the managed hunt. Training includes safety, proper mentoring, ethics, area regulations and more.

Drew Larson, a Conservation Department employee who worked at the James A. Reed Memorial Wildlife Conservation Area in Lee's Summit, was selected to help Clint.

Drew and Clint met on a crisp spring morning at the Lake City Range for a mandatory orientation the weekend before the actual hunt. By the end of the daylong orientation, which covers safety, ethics, what to wear, how to prepare for the hunt, time scouting in their assigned zone and some practice shooting, they had become close friends. Clint's dad, Jim, also attended the orientation.

The nature center provides Remington 870 youth model shotguns and ammunition to each participant in



Shelley Parnell with her twin sons, Clint, center, and Travis, right.

Hunts Together...

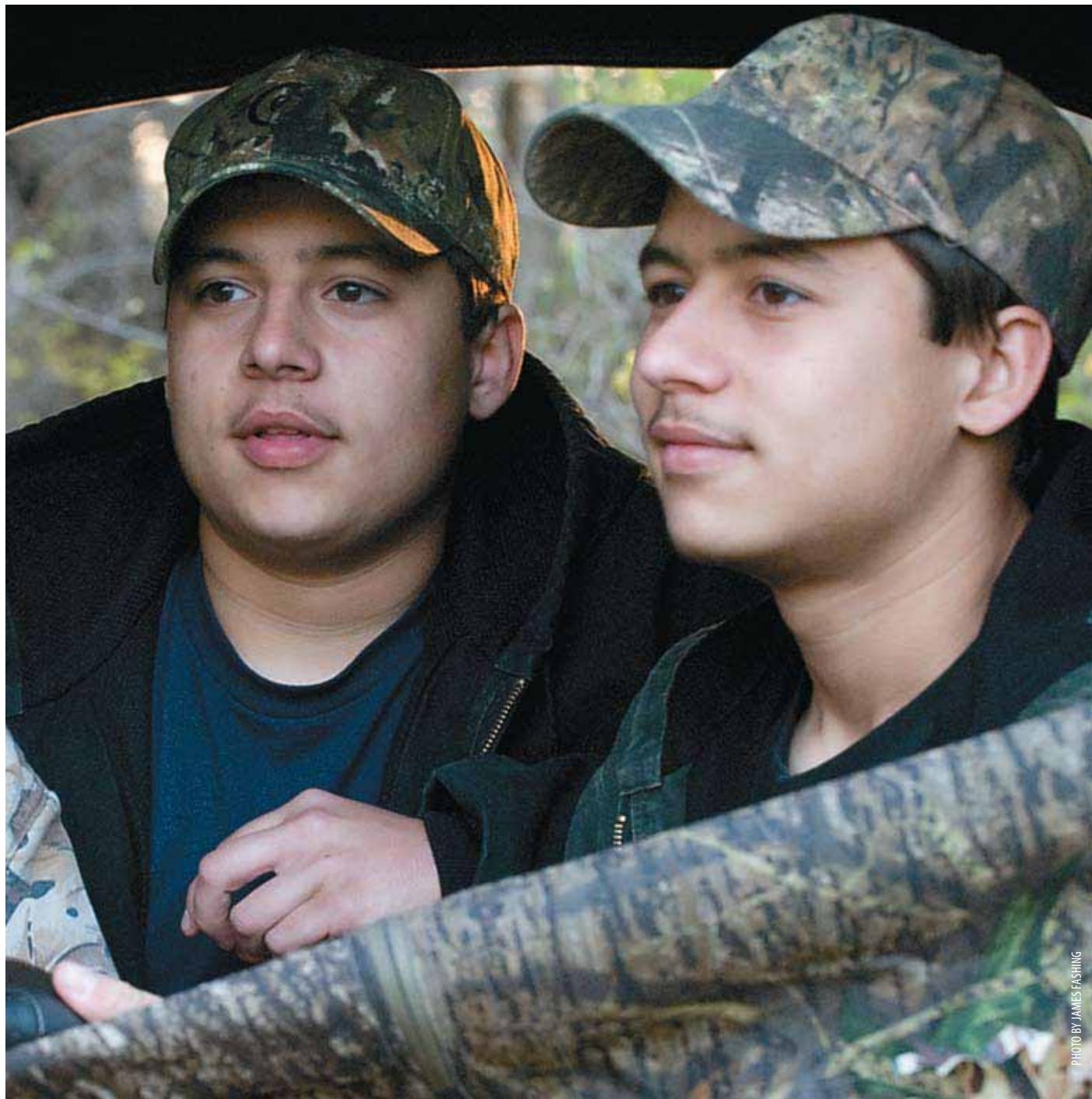


PHOTO BY JAMES FASHING



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY PARNEIL FAMILY

The Parnell twins both started turkey hunting when they were 12 years old (top). At age 16, the twins hunt regularly with their mother (right).



PHOTO BY JAMES FASHIN

the hunt. The guns were purchased with money donated to the nature center by the Kansas City Area chapter of Safari Club Inc. The Sables (the ladies chapter of the Safari Club Inc.) purchased a gun safe to store the shotguns. Camouflage blinds, snacks, supplies and lunch are provided by the National Wild Turkey Federation. The generosity of the donors and volunteers makes the special hunts possible for the kids.

A Day in the Field

On the day of the hunt, guides, youths, moms and dads gathered at the Burr Oak Woods check station at 4:30 a.m. Clint and his guide, Drew, were both excited as they checked their gear and headed out to the field. Clint's dad went with them while Travis and Shelley wished Clint good luck. Even 4:30 a.m. wasn't too early for this whole family to share in the adventure.

In the early afternoon, Drew pulled up to the check station with Clint grinning from ear to ear. He had shot a turkey! Shortly after, Shelley and Travis drove up. Clint had called them from the field on Drew's cell phone to tell them the great news.

After the turkey was weighed, Clint posed with his trophy for many photos. Drew, who ended up in a lot of the photos, showed the family how to field-dress the bird. They then took it home, eager to turn it into the main course of a delicious dinner.

"I always wanted to find something to bond us together, and hunting has been that bond."

—Shelley Parnell

Travis' Turn

As luck would have it, Clint's twin brother, Travis, was the lucky one in the 2004 annual Youth-Only Managed Turkey Hunt, and Drew became his guide. That year Shelley wanted to sit in the blind with her son and the guide.

Travis didn't get a bird on Saturday, but he said he had a good time anyway. About 11:30 on Sunday morning, however, Travis shot his tom. Soon after, Travis, Drew, Clint, Jim and the twins' grandparents were celebrating another turkey hunting success story with pictures, handshakes and high-fives.

Shelley said the hunts were the high points of the boys' lives. "They've gotten many school awards and sports awards," she said, "but nothing compares to this hunt!"

And a Twist!

A few months later, Shelley Parnell showed up at the Burr Oak Woods front desk with a grand tom turkey that she had called in herself.

Shelley, a petite woman, said she was so thrilled when her boys harvested a turkey that she wanted to try turkey hunting, too.

Drew had helped her find a landowner who gave her permission to hunt on his land.

She prepared for the hunt and went turkey hunting for the first time in her life. When the turkey she'd called appeared, she took aim and pulled the trigger.

After she'd phoned to spread the word, she said the whole family came out to her hunting spot, cameras in hand. Her first gobbler meant more meat for the dinner table and for the family photo album.

Hunting as a family

The tradition of turkey hunting has now totally taken over the Parnell family. It was almost no surprise that Travis and Clint received shotguns for Christmas that year.

Shelley and the boys go hunting together every season. Sometimes Jim comes along to be part of the group, but he mostly just sits in the blind. "At least we're all together,"



Shelley Parnell wanted to share the hunting experience with her sons, but she also finds hunting alone rewarding and peaceful.

Shelley said with a smile.

The first day of the season, a flip of the coin decides which of the boys gets to sit in the blind with their mom. The loser gets the second day.

Shelley said turkey hunting has helped her forge better relationships with her sons.

"The conversations we've had in the blind are incredible," Shelley said. "I've had tears just watching and listening to the boys. Think about how physically close we are together in the blind—and we have four to five hours to just talk and listen and be together."

"You know, I'm a mother with two sons," she said. "Dads always seem to have something to bond with their boys. It's a little harder for moms to feel connected. I always wanted to find something to bond us together, and hunting has been that bond."

As much as Shelley likes hunting with her sons, she also has learned that hunting alone can also be rewarding.

"Calling, taking it all in, listening to the morning all by myself is something I really look forward to," she said.

Turkey hunting has become so enmeshed in the Parnell family that Shelley has learned to mount the turkeys they've taken. The turkey mounts are displayed in their living room, family room and several bedrooms.

"It's a good thing that Jim's a good sport about this!" Shelley said with a laugh.

Shelley says she can see the family hunting together until she reaches 50 or 60 years old. "Then I'll sit in the back of the blind and enjoy my boys, hunting together as men," she said. ▲

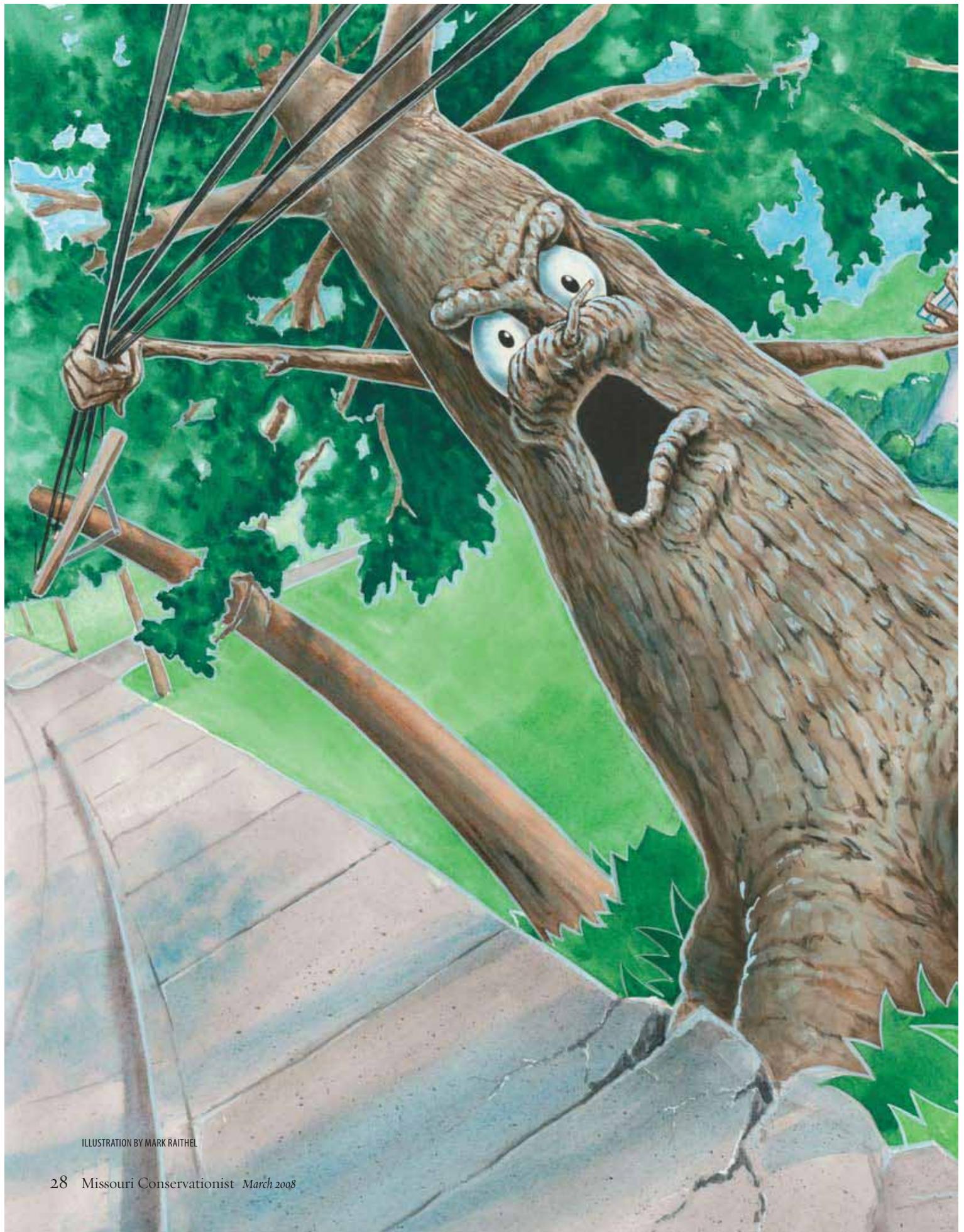
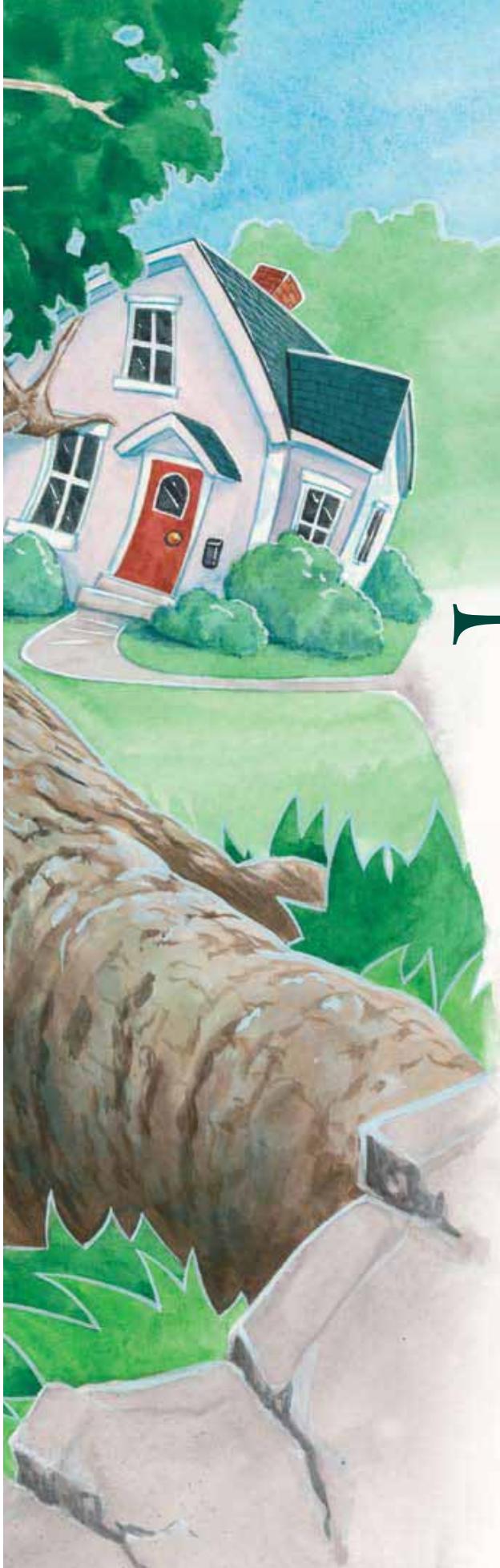


ILLUSTRATION BY MARK RAITHEL



The **R**IGHT Tree in the **R**IGHT Place

by Ann Koenig

"Plant trees. They give us two of the most crucial elements for our survival: oxygen and books."

—A. WHITNEY BROWN

'The right tree in the right place' is a phrase worth remembering.

Think of it like this: A Maserati may be the perfect car for cruising down a road in the Italian countryside; however, you wouldn't haul mulch in one. Similarly, an old pickup may be just right to keep on the farm, but its 5 mpg fuel appetite would make it a drain on the wallet for long commutes.

There is no single vehicle that meets all needs of all the people.

Trees are the same. Some species, such as dogwood, remain small their entire lives, while others, like burr oak, become large and stately. The wood of soft maples and some other species is

weak and breaks easily, while hard maples grow slowly and have much stronger wood. Each species has unique characteristics that make it a good fit in some landscapes but not in others.

Just like selecting a vehicle that is right for you and the use you intend to make of it, it's important that you pick the tree that is right for the place you intend to plant it.

"Trees are your best antiques."

—ALEXANDER SMITH

When considering what tree to plant, think first about what benefits you want from the tree. Are you planting trees as a screen from the neighbors, as an accent by your front door, for shade, or to serve as a windbreak? Are you interested in pretty trees that have beautiful spring flowers and rich fall color?

Knowing the functions you want trees to perform will help you determine which species to choose, as well as where in your landscape you might want to plant them.

Consider your site. Are there structures such as sidewalks, gardens or other trees to be avoided? Is there going to be enough room for a tree to grow?

Remember to look up! A common mistake is to plant a small sapling that will mature into large shade tree directly under a power line. This is a no-win situation for you, the tree and the utility company. Large shade trees should be planted 45 feet from overhead utility wires. If your site is close to utility lines, consider planting trees that remain small, or plant shrubs.

Whenever there is adequate room, consider planting large shade trees. The benefits from shade trees greatly outweigh those of small ornamental trees.

Big trees cool the air, provide shade, improve air and water quality and extend the life of streets. They prevent storm water runoff and soil erosion, enhance residential and commercial values, break the force of wind, and save energy used for heating and cooling. Plant large trees on the east and west sides of your home to maximize energy savings.

Big trees buffer noise and provide habitat to a variety of birds and other animals. Big trees also increase property values to the tune of about \$1,000 per tree.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, large yard trees, which live about 120 years, give us annual benefits of about \$55. Small trees, which can only be expected to live for about 30 years, give us about \$23 in benefits annually.

Large trees on the east and west sides provide shade that can lower cooling costs by 10 percent.

Small evergreens are useful as privacy screens. All trees serve as habitat for songbirds and wildlife.

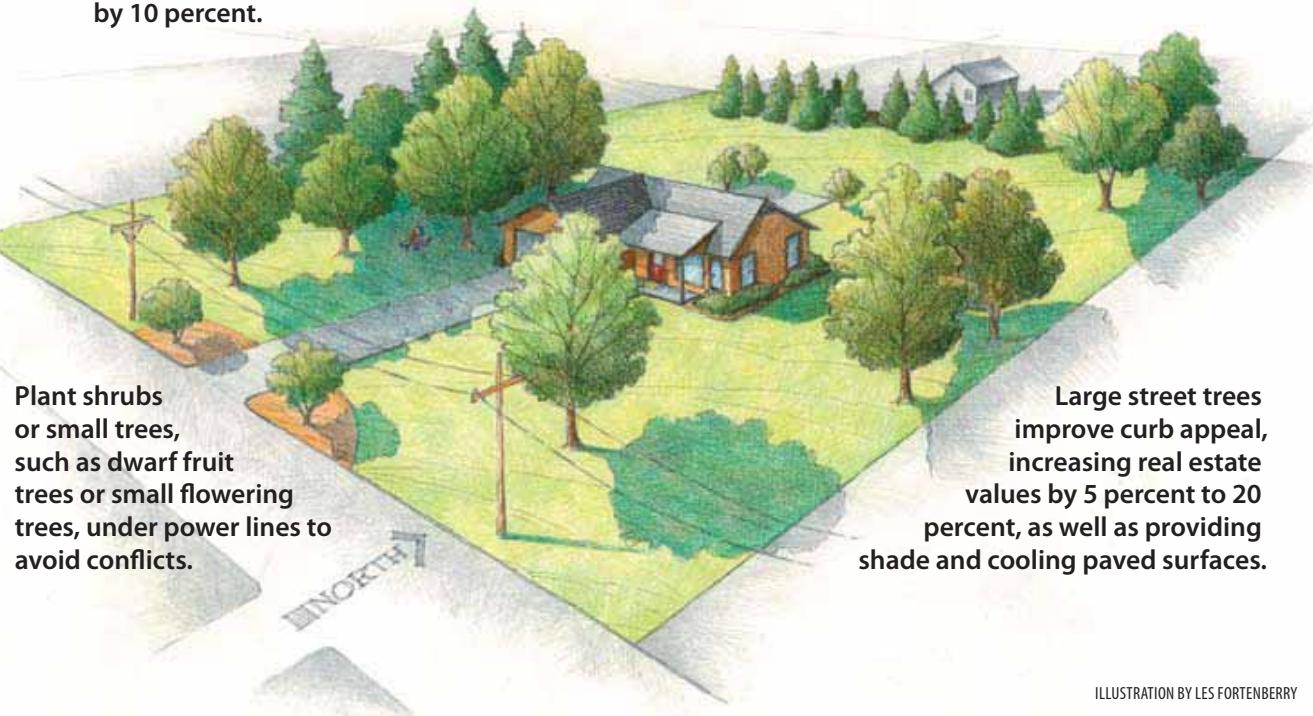


ILLUSTRATION BY LES FORTENBERRY

“He who plants a tree, plants a hope.”

—LUCY LARCOM

To plant the right tree in the right place, do your research. How big the tree will get once mature and what its general shape will be are important questions to answer.

Understanding size is pretty easy; it includes height and spread. The shape of a tree is more complex. Some trees naturally have one trunk, while others are multi-stemmed. Several kinds of trees can be purchased in a weeping form.

Although they reach similar heights, there is a big difference in the shapes of evergreens and shade trees. An evergreen is like a pyramid sitting in your yard. It takes up a lot of space at the bottom and tapers in toward the top. Shade trees turn that pyramid upside-down. Their branches are up and out of the way of people and traffic, and only their trunks are at ground level.

“Trees are the best monuments that a man can erect to his own memory. They speak his praises without flattery, and they are blessings to children yet unborn.”

—LORD ORRERY, 1749

Find out if the type of tree you are interested in is susceptible to insect and disease problems. Also consider features like fall color, showy or fragrant flowers and interesting bark. Obviously, some trees lose their leaves in the winter while others remain green all year. Bald cypress trees have needles like evergreens, but they lose them in the fall.

How much shade does the tree prefer? Some species, such as oaks, do not tolerate growing in shade. Others may survive in shade, but not produce flowers. Still other trees, such as dogwood, strongly prefer shade.

It's also helpful to know the kind of fruit a tree produces. Hollies have bright red berries that last all winter. Orchard trees like apple and cherry can be tasty additions to a yard. However, female ginkgo trees produce fruits with a very unpleasant odor, and sweet gum trees produce spiky balls that are the bane of fastidious homeowners.

Other vital characteristics to research include the hardiness of trees in the landscape. Many people prefer to select the kinds of trees that grow in Missouri forests

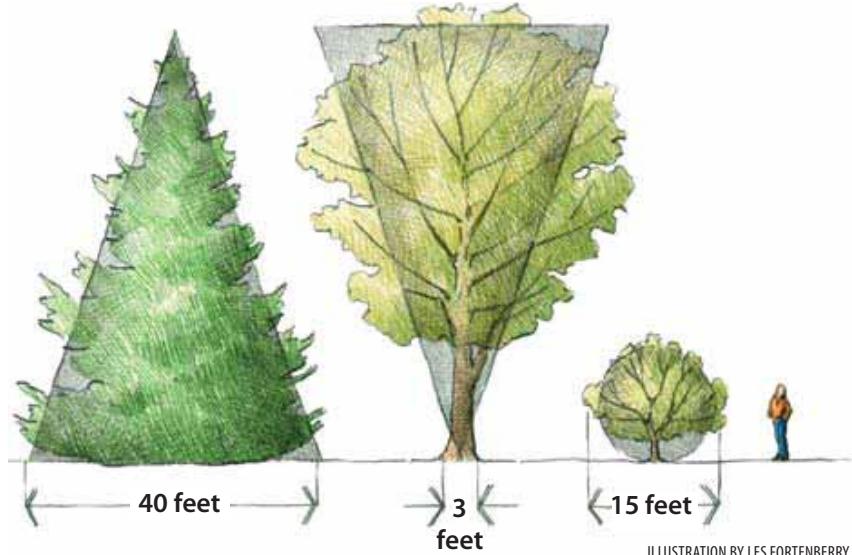


ILLUSTRATION BY LES FORTENBERRY

An evergreen is like a pyramid sitting in your yard. Shade trees turn that pyramid upside-down. Their branches are out of the way, and only their trunks are at ground level. Small trees are more ball-shaped and, like evergreens, take up significant space at ground level.

rather than non-native species, because native trees tend to be more disease resistant and less invasive. Generally, if a tree spreads easily by seed or root suckers it's not good for yards.

Some trees can withstand very poor soils while others will thrive only in soil that looks like chocolate cake. While considering soil, note if the site tends to hold water. Pines, for instance, cannot tolerate “wet feet,” but river birch fares just fine in moist soils.

For more information on making sure the right tree is in the right place, visit www.MissouriConservation.org/7392. There you can access information on tree selection for Missouri, the GrowNative! program and how to determine where best to plant trees in your yard. ▲



Bigger is Better

- ♣ Large trees remove 60 to 70 times more pollution than small trees.
- ♣ Neighborhoods with large, mature trees can be up to 11 degrees cooler in the summer than neighborhoods without the benefit of shade.
- ♣ One big tree in a community provides the cooling equivalent of five air conditioners running 20 hours per day and can cut cooling and heating costs by 10 percent.

Hunting and Fishing Calendar

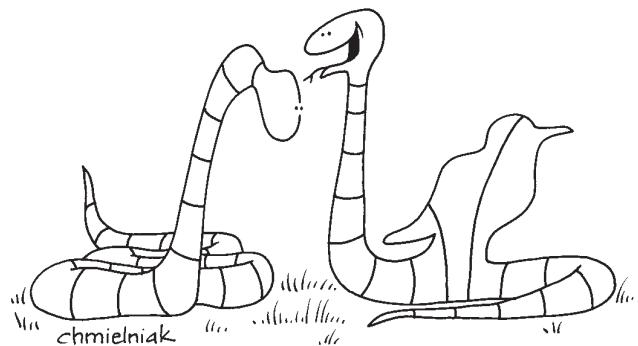
FISHING	OPEN	CLOSE
Black Bass (certain Ozark streams, see the <i>Wildlife Code</i>) impoundments and other streams year-round	5/24/08	2/28/09
Bullfrog	Sunset 6/30/08	Midnight 10/31/08
Nongame Fish Snagging	3/15/08	5/15/08
Paddlefish	3/15/08	4/30/08
Paddlefish on the Mississippi River	3/15/08	5/15/08
Trout Parks	3/1/08	10/31/08
HUNTING	OPEN	CLOSE
Coyotes	5/7/07	3/31/08
Crow	11/1/07	3/3/08
Deer		
Firearms	11/15/08	to be announced
Groundhog	5/12/08	12/15/08
Rabbits	10/1/08	2/15/09
Squirrels	5/24/08	2/15/09
Turkey		
Youth (resident only)	4/12/08	4/13/08
Spring	4/21/08	5/11/08
Light Goose Conservation Order	1/31/08	4/30/08
please see the backcover of the <i>Waterfowl Hunting Digest</i> or download the PDF at www.MissouriConservation.org/777		
TRAPPING	OPEN	CLOSE
Beaver and Nutria	11/15/07	3/31/08

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code* and the current summaries of *Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations* and *Missouri Fishing Regulations*, the *Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information*, the *Waterfowl Hunting Digest* and the *Migratory Bird Hunting Digest*. For more information visit www.MissouriConservation.org/8707 or permit vendors.

The Department of Conservation's computerized point-of-sale system allows you to purchase or replace your permits through local vendors or by phone. The toll-free number is 800-392-4115. Allow 10 days for delivery of telephone purchases. To purchase permits online go to www.wildlifelicense.com/mo/.



Paddlefishing season starts March 15.



"Is anything more delightful than the first robin of spring?"

Contributors



ANN KOENIG has worked as a forester for the Department of Conservation for 10 years and is a Certified Arborist. She, her family and 36 yard trees reside in Columbia. This article is dedicated to Don Bade of Owensville whose lifetime of kindness to his community included caring for trees.



Department of Conservation photographer NOPPADOL PAOTHONG was first captivated by prairie chickens in 2001 and eventually became a strong advocate for their restoration. When not traveling and photographing, he enjoys his time at home cooking. He, his wife and his 1-year-old golden retriever live in Jefferson City.

OPERATION FOREST ARSON

If you see or learn
of someone deliberately
setting a fire,
please dial toll-free:

1-800-392-1111

TIME CAPSULE

March 1998

Hitching a Ride was written by Craig Anderson about pesky, sticky fruit and seed plants that attach to animals or people's clothing. There are many different types of "sticky seeds" in this state and some are considered to be a fruit. Cheatgrass, Spanish needles, beggars' ticks, tick trefoil needlegrass, cocklebur and burdock are a few sticky seeds and fruit. Some are as small as a head of a pin while others are the size of a nickel. They can be found in the prairies of the southwest and north to the forest and glades of the Ozarks and, maybe, in your own back yard. It seems that no matter where you go in Missouri, you are likely to have a sticky seed or fruit attach to your clothes when venturing outside.—Contributed by the Circulation staff



AGENT NOTES

Enjoy the Outdoors as a Turkey Hunting Family

IN TODAY'S HECTIC society we are all faced with the burden of not having enough time to get everything accomplished. As a result, family relationships are suffering. Parents and children seem to be drifting apart, each doing their own thing, instead of participating in family activities like hunting and fishing.

Spring turkey season is approaching, and there is not a better time to involve the family in the great outdoors. Parents should encourage each family member to experience the woods as they come alive on crisp spring mornings. Kids and adults who haven't heard a whippoorwill, an owl or a gobbling turkey are in for a treat. Those who have will enjoy them even more when they share them with family members.

Hunting is an important part of our family heritage. Years ago my father asked me to tag along when he went hunting, and it changed my life forever. Since then we have shared countless memories in the field and forged a strong relationship. Those hunting trips also influenced my career.

This spring, as you sneak along in pursuit of that wise old tom, don't leave the family behind. The real value of the outdoors is shared experiences and priceless memories. Make hunting your family tradition.



Billy Barton is the conservation agent for Iron County, which is in the Southeast region. If you would like to contact the agent for your county, phone your regional Conservation office listed on page 3.

behind the CODE

MDC stocks paddlefish for anglers to catch in spring.

BY TOM CWYNAR

Our native paddlefish are peculiar from tip to tail. They have no scales, bones or, when adults, teeth, and a long paddle-shaped snout takes up about a third of their body length. These plankton-eating fish can grow huge. The state record is 139 pounds, 4 ounces.

Because paddlefish are not attracted by lures or baits, the only way to catch them is to snag them with weighted hooks.

The Code allows anglers to snag paddlefish from March 15 through April 30, which is when paddlefish cluster to make spawning runs upstream. Dams on the rivers now interfere with those runs, so the Conservation Department annually stocks paddlefish. On the Mississippi River, the spring season lasts through May 15, and a fall season is open Sept. 15 through Dec. 15. Anglers can take two fish per day.

On Table Rock and Truman lakes and Lake of the Ozarks and their tributaries, fish must measure 34 inches from eye to fork of tail to be harvested. They are measured this way because rostrum, or nose, size is not always related to body size, and rostrums and fins may be damaged or missing. On other waters, the length limit is 24 inches.

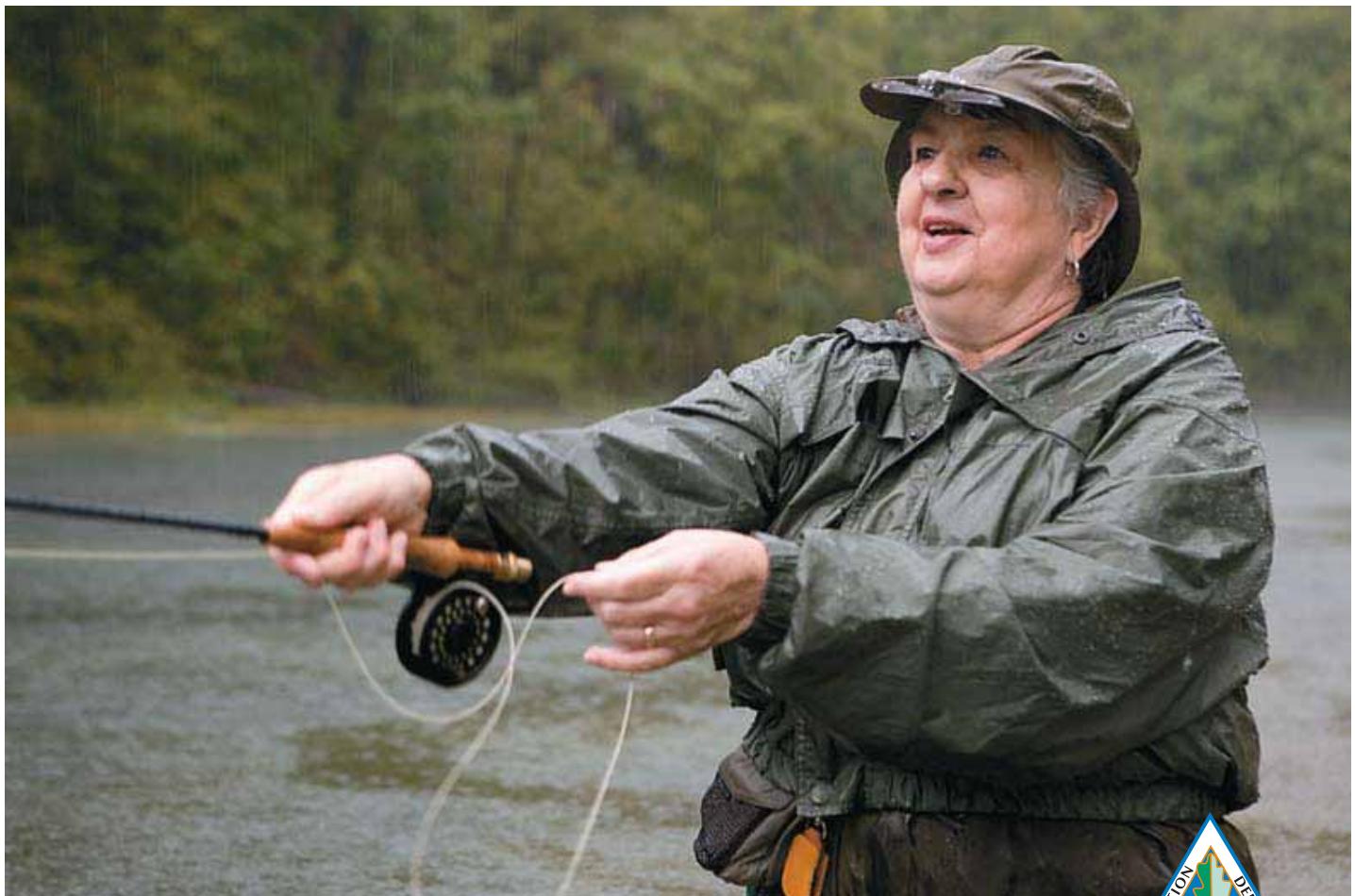
The Code prohibits possession of extracted paddlefish eggs while on the water, and their transportation. Eggs may not be bought, sold or offered for sale.

The Summary of Fishing Regulations details paddlefishing rules. To learn more about these peculiar fish and obtain an in-season snagging report, go to www.MissouriConservation.org and search for "paddlefish."



"I AM CONSERVATION"

Mary Ann Smerek of Osage Bend in Cole County enjoys fly-fishing at Bennet Springs State Park. She usually goes trout fishing at least twice a month during the season with her husband. "My husband, Bob, was into it, and I thought it looked like fun, so I gave it a try. I like fishing and I like the outdoors. Most trout fishing areas are very beautiful and serene," she says. "I used to fish on the Gasconade River when I was a kid. My grandparents were from Vienna, and I would go down and my uncles would take me fishing. I've had the bug ever since." To learn more about conservation activities, visit www.MissouriConservation.org.—PHOTO BY DAVID STONNER



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